Dr. Lechner dies, once sued the PC

LOS ANGELES — Dr. John R. Lechner, 67, founder of the Americanism Educational League, died Feb. 12 after a lengthy illness.

The Austrian-born educator came to California in 1924 and founded his league in 1927 "to promote the American constitutional form of government and expose subversive propaganda". He was honored for his work by the American Legion in 1957 and by the City Council in 1959.

Dr. Lechner was to have been commended for his Americanism by the California state legislature in February, 1961 but then national JACL president Frank Chuman strongly opposed and the resolution was permanently tabled.

Chuman had referred to stories in the Pacific Citizen, which described Lechner as a "bigoted racist" for his activities during and post WW2 period questioning the loyalty of persons of Japanese ancestry in America.

A month later, Lechner sued the Pacific Citizen for retraction or damages of the article written by Larry Tajiri commenting upon the legislative action. No retraction was made and no further action was taken. It was the first time the JACL publication had been sued.

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